

Yoga and Meditation

Taoist yoga is very similar to Hindu yoga, and is also described as an **internal form of alchemy**.

Its **over-all goal** is to free the **yang** spirit, the *shen*, from the **yin** *kwei* and body.

- unlike other religious traditions (Hinduism and Buddhism), the great thing was that you did not have to actually die to free the spirit. You could do it while **still in this very life**.

Its **method** is somewhat abstruse and deliberately mystical. But it inevitably involves a number of steps, the first of which is **nourishing and transforming the *ch'i*** and then of **nourishing and transforming the *shen***, so that **your *shen* is one with the Tao**. And all of which are based on successfully applying the principles of *Wu Wei*.

- practitioners undergo a long, very selective **initiation** process to even begin to start mediation.

- technically, there are three forms of Taoist mediation: concentrative meditation, insightful meditation, and "ecstatic journeys."

- Ecstatic meditation allows one to leave your material body as pure *shen* and visit other places and spheres.

- all have in common two key attributes:

1. - great emphasis is placed on proper **breathing techniques**. Good breathing involves not only the nose and lungs, but the **whole body**, starting with the heels.

- these exercises must be done between midnight and noon, when the air is "alive."

- the most auspicious time to do any form of alchemy is the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. The next best is the seventh day of the seventh lunar month (the 29-day calendar).

- one meditative technique is to adjust your breathing rate to the heartbeat, gradually reducing both, taking fewer and fewer breaths

- the final goal is "**fetal breathing**." Here the practitioner breathes without either inhaling or exhaling. - to *wu wei*

- this is **very hard** and takes years of practice, although we all can do easily it when we are **first born**. !!!!

- Life is a matter of overcoming a lot of bad habits !!!!

– Taoists believe that a person is allotted a certain number of breaths at birth; when the breaths are all used up – the person dies. So the object of mediation is to **breathe as little as possible** – to *wu wei*

2. – also try to eat a little as possible. **Food** simply clogs up the system and keeps the *shen* stuck in the gross body, feeding the *kwei*

– Once you perfect these techniques, and others, your pulse ceases and you enter the Great Quietude **you merge with the rhythms of the Tao**